



To: Liam Skinner, Interim Superintendent of Schools
From: Latifah Phillips, Chief Equity and Engagement Officer
Date: August 10, 2023
Re: 2023-24 School Assignment Update

Below please find an update on the school assignment process for SY24. Information for this report has been provided by Lisa Van Thiel, Early Childhood Coordinator, Sara Zatorsky, McKinney Vento Homeless Liaison, and Abisola Ogunseye, the new FRC Coordinator.

PreK Enrollment

As of August 10, 2023 enrollment in preschool for SY24 is as follows:

- 178 students with special needs are enrolled in sub-separate and inclusive preschool classrooms for 3- and 4-year-olds
- 339 four-year-olds are enrolled as peer models
- 35 additional students with special needs are in the placement process
- 14 students will receive special education services at Head Start
- 14 preschoolers will receive service only (speech and language, OT, or PT)

There are currently 57 inclusive preschool openings - 10 in AM sessions across three schools and 47 in PM sessions across 7 schools. Half day PM sessions have historically been less requested by families than full day and half day AM seats. Currently for this upcoming school year, 140 families requested a full day seat yet only 54 seats were available. Families who were not assigned a full day seat via the pre-K lottery are being offered half-day LPS seats in addition to the option of full-day seats in partnering community programs.

Transportation continues to present a barrier for some families who would like access to preschool for their children. Another important note is that the District does not offer programs for 3 year old peer models. Offering 3-year-old programs would provide age-appropriate peer models for our three-year-old students with disabilities. Solutions for these challenges are continuing to be explored within the Early Childhood Department.

Updated chart to reflect additional CSA classrooms

School	Half day AM	Half day PM	Full-day		Sped AM	Sped PM	Sped full	CSA	CSA AM	CSA PM	LEAP	Total
Bailey	9	9			3	3		9				33
Bartlett LEAP	9	9	9		3	3	6				10	49
Cardinal	18	18	27		4	4	16	27	9	9		132
Greenhalge	9	9	9		6	3	6	9				51
Lincoln	18	18			12	12						60
McAuliffe	18	18			12	12						60
McAvinnue	9	9			4	4		9				35
Moody	9	9			6	6						30
Morey	18	18			12	12		9	9	9		87
Murkland	9	9	9		6	6	6					45
Pawtucketville	9	9			6	6		9				39
Pyne Arts	9	9			6	6		9				39
Reilly	9	9			3	3		9				33
Shaughnessy	9	9			6	6		18				48
Washington CSA								9				9
Washington Half-day	9	9			6	6		9				39
												789
Totals	171	171	54		95	92	34	126	18	18	10	789

K-12 Enrollment

The following steps are being implemented to support the school assignment process:

Hours of Operation

After hours appointments continue to be a service available to families. Additionally, the FRC has extended hours from 4pm-6pm beginning the week of August 21 through September 6, which is the first day of kindergarten. Two Saturdays have also been scheduled for open hours leading up to the first day of school: August 22 and 29. This information is being posted on the district's website, social media outlets and within the FRC.

Parents/Guardians can choose to submit their online application by utilizing the computers at the FRC or from any off-site location where they have access to a computer. Additionally, there are online applications for parents/guardians to request a school transfer or bus transportation. The Central Office bilingual liaison team continues to support all families who come to the FRC to submit any of these online applications. For the month of July, the FRC logged 613 walk-ins. And for the month of August, the FRC has already supported over 400 walk-ins.

Additionally, over the summer, the McKinney Vento team has conducted 147 daytime and after-hours home visits as part of the screening and support process for families experiencing homelessness. Currently, 11% of the district's population has been identified as experiencing homelessness as defined by the McKinney Vento Federal Law.

Temporary Call Center

Leading up to school opening, in addition to an increase in walk-ins, the FRC historically receives a spike in phone calls regarding school assignment, transfer requests, and transportation as well as non-registration school related questions on topics such as class schedules, school calendar, school records, work permits, among other inquiries. To accommodate the increase in calls that the FRC typically receives in the weeks leading up to the new school year, the FRC will set up a temporary call center with additional phone lines being answered by district staff and a team of interns. The goal will be to increase the number of calls that are answered and reduce the number of voicemail messages left and call backs needing to be made.

The FRC currently has been using a traditional office phone system yet the FRC call volume leading up to the school year requires a phone system that reflects the needs of a “call center”. Therefore, FRC staff are working with the IT team to set up a phone system that will not only enable multiple lines to be answered simultaneously but will be able to produce data that can subsequently be analyzed to identify areas for continuous improvement.

Transfer Requests

The district’s current school assignment policy allows for one school transfer per child each year where space is available within a school and grade. While in prior years phone and email transfer requests were accepted, in order to track and monitor all school transfer requests in a fair and systemic manner, an online form is the sole vehicle by which a family can request a transfer for the 2023-24 school year.

Prior to the close of the school year, a communication was sent to families and posted on the website informing them of the transfer form. Families were also informed that transfer requests received by June 23rd will be eligible for a weighted lottery when the number of transfer requests for a specific school and grade exceeds the number of available seats, as delineated within the district’s school assignment policy. Requests received after June 23rd are being placed on a waitlist in the order they are received. Per the school assignment policy, placements from the transfer lottery will continue until the 20th day of school.

The FRC has to-date received 472 transfer requests with 333 requests meeting the cut-off date. Placements are being made to schools where seats are available within a requested grade. For schools with full class sizes – such as two K-8 schools - Pyne Arts and Bartlett – and 5th grade classes at the Butler, Daley and Wang, transfer requests are on hold pending the outcome of the district’s “roll over” of enrollment data which takes place on August 15th. The “roll-over” is a functional process of moving school data from the current school year to the next school year. This process includes accounting for students who have been promoted to the next grade or retained within the same grade, in addition to ensuring that withdrawn students are removed from school and grade enrollment. Once the FRC receives updated enrollment numbers, decisions will be able to be made regarding available seats that can be assigned from the lottery and waitlist.

Families have received a communication informing them that they will be notified of **approved** transfer requests by way of email, phone call, text and letter. Families who have not received notice of an approved transfer request prior to the start of school should

anticipate that their child will continue attending their same school placement from the 2022-23 school year or the middle school that has been designated via the district's feeder pattern.

Streamlining of Application Process

To date, the FRC has completed 972 kindergarten registrations. There are 29 kindergarten registrations currently being processed, bringing the current kindergarten enrollment to just over 1000 students. LPS closed the 2022-23 school year with a kindergarten enrollment of 1065 students and anticipates new kindergarten students to register through the Labor Day weekend; however, the vast majority of the kindergarten class has been enrolled.

Since the opening of the assignment application for the new school year, the FRC has continued to monitor the time it takes from submission of application to receipt of school assignment. At least 40% of applications are averaging more than one week. This is due to incomplete applications - more specifically, the lack of required documents being uploaded that are needed in order for the process to be completed. This has resulted in FRC clerks' time being allocated to conducting outreach to families for gathering missing documents.

To address this inefficiency, the FRC will reinstitute a shortened paper application for in-person applicants which will enable staff to counsel families around gathering all of the required documents prior to submitting the online application and then scheduling an individual appointment or indicating a return date during drop-in hours where they can fully submit their application. This change in process is anticipated to not only increase time efficiency for families at the front end of the application process, but also increase the expectation and accountability of a quick turnaround by the FRC clerks given that from August 10th and forward, all applications submitted into the portal will be 100% complete and ready to be processed.

Additionally, with "continuous improvement" being a core value of the FRC and Equity Office, a new mechanism was instituted at the end of the 2022-23 school year which enables schools to formally report in real time any issues they experience with individual student assignments to their school. This will enable the FRC to capture data for process monitoring, review and initiation of process improvements when deemed necessary.

Medical Compliance

As of Friday, August 4th, 187 students had not been medically cleared for school. The health liaison situated within the FRC is coordinating with the Lowell Community Health Center to conduct follow ups with families of non-medically cleared families and schedule them for one of two immunization clinics that have been confirmed to take place on August 12th and August 26th. Ninety students can be serviced at each scheduled clinic – for a total of 180 students – and students must have an appointment in advance in order to receive the service.

Students who have not received medical clearance by the first day of school will still receive their school assignment; however, they will be barred from attending class until receiving approval by the health department designee, FRC health liaison or school nurse.

The FRC will continue to work closely with school leaders and the health department to ensure that the district is able to both place children on rosters who can be counted toward the October 1 state reporting deadline while also ensuring that the health compliance requirements are fully met.